

***Mid-Week Alert  
From  
Mental Health America  
of Virginia***

November 28, 2007

**Action Mental health parity is at risk!**

Thousands of people like you made a difference and helped win unanimous Senate passage of the Mental Health Parity Act of 2007 (S. 558) in September. You also helped build broad support for a strong House bill. But we face a growing risk that parity legislation could get lost in the jousting over other priority issues. A failure to enact a parity bill this year could set back the parity movement for a long time. Let's not let that happen!

Parity is one issue on which there is broad bipartisan agreement. The President has signaled his readiness to sign a bill. The time is now! It's time for congressional leaders, who've **said** the right thing, to **do** the right thing!

There is no time to waste! Email your Senators and Member of Congress today and demand that Congress enact a strong parity bill this year! Click on the link below to send your email.

<http://takeaction.mentalhealthamerica.net/paritynow>

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**Action Repeal the 50 percent mental health co-pay**

Over the next couple weeks as the Senate Finance Committee develops a Medicare bill, advocates have a key opportunity to end the Medicare program's discriminatory practice of imposing a much higher co-insurance requirement for outpatient mental health services (50 percent instead of the usual 20 percent). This unfair practice has severely restricted access to needed mental health care. Although the bill is primarily focused on delaying a scheduled cut in Medicare physician-payments, it will also address other issues. Parity dictates that Congress eliminate this arbitrary barrier that prevents many seniors and individuals with disabilities who rely on Medicare from receiving needed mental health care. **Senators need to hear from us!**

The House of Representatives has already passed a provision repealing Medicare's 50 percent co-pay for outpatient mental health services as part of a larger bill to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program. But, with the House and Senate working to develop a final Medicare bill, Congress is unlikely to eliminate this unfair penalty on mental health treatment unless the Senate includes the measure in its bill. **Pressure your Senators to repeal the 50 percent mental health co-pay as part of their larger Medicare bill.**

Millions of senior citizens and people with disabilities who rely on Medicare have mental health conditions that require treatment. Over 25 percent of Medicare beneficiaries have mental health conditions, and individuals who qualify for Medicare based on their disabled status have very high rates of mental health conditions - some 59 percent have mental disorders and 37 percent have severe disorders. The 50% co-pay requirement is a substantial barrier to care that has undoubtedly contributed to the very high suicide rate among older Americans. [\*\*Tell your Senators its time to provide affordable mental health care to seniors and individuals with disabilities.\*\*](#)

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**FYI WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE ROUNDTABLE PRE-SESSION MEETING**

**Moderated by the League of Women Voters of Virginia**

BECOME AN EFFECTIVE WOMEN'S ADVOCATE AT THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION

Wednesday, December 5, 2007                      9:30 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

House Room 1, Old Capitol Building, Capitol Square, Richmond, Virginia

Speakers will provide information on the upcoming legislative session and show how you can make a difference

*There is no charge for the morning session.*

*Followed by a **LUNCHEON MEETING***

12:15 to 3:00 P.M., Senate Room 3, new underground section of the Capitol

Preview of legislative proposals expected during the upcoming General Assembly session directly from Legislators  
Presentation on the features of Virginia's Legislative website

**Registration for Luncheon Required – by November 30, 2007**

*Cost: \$30*

*Women's Legislative Roundtable, founded in 1981*

*An information forum at the General Assembly for 26 years*

The Women's Roundtable does not take positions on issues, but exchanges information.

[www.LWV-VA.org](http://www.LWV-VA.org)

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**FYI Find Attached The Flyer for this year's Coalition for Virginians with Mental Disabilities**

**FYI MHA releases a study "Ranking the States: An Analysis of Depression Across the States"**

### **About the Study**

"Ranking the States: An Analysis of Depression Across the States" was researched and written by Mental Health America and Thomson Healthcare. It looks at data from 2002-2006 and was conducted from July to November 2007. The report compares depression levels and suicide rates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and uses the information to highlight solutions to improve states' mental health status.

Mental Health America has two goals for the report: (1) spur the development of a public health surveillance system to monitor the mental health of Americans and the specific impact of depression, and (2) to stimulate action by communities, public health professionals, federal and state policy makers, and others to address depression in their populations.

For the full report go to [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

### **Coming Events**

12/5/2007 10:00 [Mental Health Planning Council Meeting](#)

12/12/2007 08:15 [Scott D. Miller, Ph.D., The Heart and Soul of Change: What Works in](#)

12/12/2007 09:00 [New Applicant Training Residential Adult Services/Other Children & Adolescent Services](#)

12/13/2007 09:00 [Residential Services for Children & Adolescents](#)

12/19/2007 10:00 [Public Hearing to receive comments on the Annual Synar Report](#)

12/19/07 10:00 [Joint Commission on Health Care](#); Senate Room A, General Assembly Building

